

### [Redistricting Efforts in North Carolina May 'Bleach' the State](#) (AFRO.com – May 7, 2011)

By AFRO Staff

Redistricting efforts in North Carolina have taken a combative turn as the Republican-controlled state legislature looks to create new districts benefiting its party. Republicans are planning to try to re-draw the districts in a way that would give African Americans a shot at adding another member of Congress, but would shift power to Republicans statewide by increasing GOP voting strength in non-Black regions. "It's politically probable that there will be a new minority influence district," state Rep. Patrick McHenry (R) told Politico. "It's logical based on the demographics of our state." At the center of the redistricting calculus is the large Black vote bloc representing 33 percent of the electorate in a state that has a long history of drawing district lines to minimize the Black vote's impact. But North Carolina's governors since 1992 have been Democrats and the state voted for Barack Obama in 2008. So even though Republicans are flexing newfound clout as the majority party in the statehouse as a result of the 2010 general election, they are facing tough non-partisan opposition. "You can't take a community and split it just because you feel like these numbers would be better over in another district," Lucia Messina, a volunteer with Democracy North Carolina, a non-partisan voter activist group, told Lumina News in Wrightsville Beach, N.C. "It's got to be that the community is going to benefit from it." Messina's sentiments are resonating throughout the state, as redistricting has become a hot topic, according to political analysts and activists. "Representative democracy depends on voters freely choosing their elected officials," Audrey Albrecht, a representative for the League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear, said according to the Wilmington Star News. "When, instead, officials choose their voters, our system does not work as intended." Despite residents' concerns, some Democrats in North Carolina and nationwide questioned whether the state GOP's plans will work. Rep. **Mel Watt**, one of two African-Americans in the state's congressional delegation, and Democratic analyst and former Texas Rep. Martin Frost (D) say Republicans may have a legal fight on their hands if they attempt to push their plan through the state legislature. "They are trying to concentrate minority voters into as few districts as possible and to bleach surrounding districts with as little minority population as possible," Frost told Politico. "It remains to be seen whether a Justice Department under Democratic control will go along."